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Letter dated 30 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement on the political situation in Nepal, issued on 30 January 2006 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council

(*Signed*) Gerhard **Pfanzelter**
Permanent Representative of Austria
to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 30 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

Statement on the political situation in Nepal, issued on 30 January 2006 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union

The European Union continues to be deeply concerned over the situation in Nepal, where political forces seem to be moving towards an ever more severe confrontation and polarization, thus increasing the risk of deepening the political crisis.

The European Union gives its full support to the moderate voices in Nepal working towards the goal of a sustainable peace based on the principles of a civilian, accountable and democratic government.

The European Union strongly condemns the use of force to suppress the Nepalese people's exercise of fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. The European Union finds that the Government's extensive restrictions on the Nepalese society, political parties and civil society over the last week are disproportionate and do not comply with Nepal's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The European Union calls upon the King, the Government of Nepal and the security forces to immediately restore all political and civil liberties in accordance with Nepal's international obligations, immediately release all political prisoners and human rights defenders, and ensure that political and civil rights, including freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, can be exercised peacefully.

The European Union strongly condemns the resumption of Maoist violence, including the recent murder of an election candidate.

The European Union deeply regrets the Government's failure to seize the opportunity provided by the Maoists' unilateral ceasefire to declare a truce.

The European Union underlines the obligation of all parties to fully respect international humanitarian law, including by way of protecting civilians and facilitating the access of humanitarian organizations seeking to aid affected persons.

The European Union reiterates that what Nepal and its people urgently need is a cessation of armed hostilities as a first step in an inclusive and comprehensive peace process.

The European Union underlines its stand on elections. For the elections to be meaningful it is crucial that they be held in direct consultation with the political parties as part of an exercise to establish a full return to democracy. The fact that no such consultation has taken place means that the planned municipal elections will be another step backwards for democracy and are likely to further polarize positions.

The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Croatia,* the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* and Turkey, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the stabilization and association process.